

**COUNTY OF SAN LUIS OBISPO BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
AGENDA ITEM TRANSMITTAL**

|   |  |  |                      |
|---|--|--|----------------------|
| (1) DEPARTMENT<br>Social Services   | (2) MEETING DATE<br>5/5/2015             | (3) CONTACT/PHONE<br>Lee Collins, 781-1834<br>Laurel Weir, 781-1833  |                      |
| (4) SUBJECT<br>Status report on implementation of the contract with Transitions Mental Health Association for the 50 Now Program, which provides housing and supportive services for chronically homeless individuals. All Districts. |  |  |                      |
| (5) RECOMMENDED ACTION<br>It is recommended that the Board receive and file this report.  |  |  |                      |
| (6) FUNDING SOURCE(S)<br>N/A  | (7) CURRENT YEAR FINANCIAL IMPACT<br>\$0 | (8) ANNUAL FINANCIAL IMPACT<br>\$0   | (9) BUDGETED?<br>Yes |
| (10) AGENDA PLACEMENT<br><input type="checkbox"/> Consent <input type="checkbox"/> Presentation <input type="checkbox"/> Hearing (Time Est. ____ ) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Board Business (Time Est. <u>60 min</u> )      |  |  |                      |
| (11) EXECUTED DOCUMENTS<br><input type="checkbox"/> Resolutions <input type="checkbox"/> Contracts <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinances <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A  |  |  |                      |
| (12) OUTLINE AGREEMENT REQUISITION NUMBER (OAR)   |  | (13) BUDGET ADJUSTMENT REQUIRED?<br>BAR ID Number:<br><input type="checkbox"/> 4/5 Vote Required <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A |                      |
| (14) LOCATION MAP<br>N/A  | (15) BUSINESS IMPACT STATEMENT?<br>N/A   | (16) AGENDA ITEM HISTORY<br><input type="checkbox"/> N/A    Date: <u>8/26/14</u>   |                      |
| (17) ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE REVIEW<br>Morgan Torell  |  |  |                      |
| (18) SUPERVISOR DISTRICT(S)<br>All Districts  |  |  |                      |

# County of San Luis Obispo



TO: Board of Supervisors

FROM: Social Services / Lee Collins, 781-1834  
Laurel Weir, 781-1833

DATE: 5/5/2015

SUBJECT: Status report on implementation of the contract with Transitions Mental Health Association for the 50 Now Program, which provides housing and supportive services for chronically homeless individuals. All Districts.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Board receive and file this report.

## **DISCUSSION**

On August 26, 2014, the Board of Supervisors approved a three year contract with Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA) in the amount of \$1,860,098 to place 50 chronically homeless individuals into housing and provide supportive services for those individuals to help them maintain their housing. At that time, staff agreed to report on the progress of program implementation to the Board at nine, fifteen and twenty one months into implementation. This is the first of those reports to your Board.

## **BACKGROUND**

On any night, approximately 26% of the homeless population in San Luis Obispo County is chronically homeless. Persons are considered to be chronically homeless if they have a disability and have been homeless either for a year continuously or at least four times in the past three years. Chronically homeless persons are more likely to have serious mental illness and co-occurring addictions disorders and use services at much higher rates than non-chronically homeless persons.

In recent years, the "Housing First" approach has emerged as the most effective model for permanently housing chronically homeless persons. "Housing First" is a low barrier housing model, coupled with intensive support services, including mental health treatment (for more information about the Housing First model, please see the 11/5/13 and 8/26/14 reports to the Board from the Department of Social Services). On November 5, 2013, the HSOC recommended that the County implement a "Housing First" program. In partnership with the HSOC, the Housing Authority of San Luis Obispo (HASLO) offered to make 50 Housing Choice Vouchers available to vulnerable, chronically homeless persons, provided that the clients would receive case management and other supportive services to help them maintain their housing. On November 5, 2013, the County Board of Supervisors directed staff to issue a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide the proposed services.

With input from the County Department of Social Services, the County Health Agency, HASLO, the City of San Luis Obispo, and a Housing First expert from Santa Clara County, the County Administrative Office issued an RFP. One response was received, from Transitions Mental Health Association (TMHA). That response was thoroughly reviewed by Administrative office staff in consultation with staff from the County Department of Social Services, the County Health Agency, HASLO, and the City of San Luis Obispo and was recommended for approval. As previously mentioned, the Board then approved a contract with TMHA on August 26, 2014, and program implementation began in September.

## **INITIAL SURVEY AND LIST**

To identify vulnerable chronically homeless persons for the 50 Now program, County and nonprofit staff and trained volunteers surveyed just under 300 chronically homeless persons in locations around the County. Surveys were collected at a variety of services sites as well as at the jail, County Courthouse and selected street locations. Survey sites included the Prado Day Center; the El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO) shelter; meal programs in Paso Robles, Atascadero, Morro Bay, and Grover Beach; Community Health Centers clinics; Sierra Vista Regional Medical Center; and street locations identified by local law enforcement or homeless service agencies. The survey process was coordinated by the County Department of Social Services, with the support of the United Way of San Luis Obispo.

Using the Vulnerability Index-Services Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (VI-SPDAT), clients were identified as vulnerable or non-vulnerable, based on health history, frequency of hospitalizations and emergency room usage, and age. Risk factors indicating vulnerability include being over the age of 60, experiencing tri-morbidity (defined as co-occurring mental illness and addictions disorders accompanied by a chronic health condition), having certain health conditions such as kidney failure, and frequent hospitalizations or emergency room usage. The following provides a summary of key demographic information from those chronically homeless persons who were surveyed:

- The average age of all survey respondents was 49.3 years old and the average age of persons identified as vulnerable was 51.3 years.
- 21% of all respondents were aged 60+
- 59% were males and 41% were females
- 10% were veterans
- Average total time homeless, all respondents: 5.29 years
- Average total time homeless, vulnerable persons: 7.21 years

As expected, persons who were vulnerable reported more health issues than non-vulnerable persons:

- 80% of vulnerable persons exhibited signs of addictions disorders versus 48% of non-vulnerable persons
- 86% of vulnerable persons reported or exhibited signs of a mental health condition
- 64% of vulnerable persons reported having tri-morbidity (co-occurring mental health condition combined with an addictions disorder and a chronic physical health condition) versus 11% of non-vulnerable persons

Using VI-SPDAT scores, a list of the 50 highest scoring vulnerable persons was given to TMHA. In a few cases, the individuals were also accompanied by a family member who was also vulnerable and TMHA was asked to house the family as a unit. This resulted in TMHA receiving a list of 53 persons instead of the planned 50. Hereinafter, the term "Top 50" refers to the Top 50 most vulnerable persons.

## **INITIAL TOP 50 MOST VULNERABLE PERSONS**

Of the persons in the initial top 50:

- 20% were from North County
- 26% were from South County
- 8% were from Coastal regions
- 34% were from San Luis Obispo
- 12% were surveyed in jail or other institutions and were not associated with a particular region

The average person was approximately 51 years old and had been homeless for an average of 8.49 years and the average length of time they had resided in the County was 23 years. 14% were veterans.

## GOALS AND OUTCOMES

According to the terms of the Contract, TMHA would seek to achieve the following milestones:

1. Within 9 months, TMHA would permanently house 17 individuals
2. Within 15 months, TMHA would permanently house 34 individuals (cumulative)
3. Within 21 months, TMHA would permanently house 50 individuals (cumulative)

As of April 15, 2015 (less than 9 months after the program began), TMHA has housed 27 persons, three of whom were homeless children or spouses/partners of persons in the Top 50. Approximately 93% have remained in their housing since placement. Two (7%) of those persons housed left their housing to move into another permanent housing opportunity with family. The 27 persons placed into housing have remained for an average of 109 days, or just over 3 ½ months.

In addition to the milestones noted above for housing, the Contract with TMHA also listed ten performance objectives, listed below. TMHA staff are working to obtain necessary release of information forms from clients and County staff are working with the partners noted below on reporting processes. Except as noted, one year data for these outcomes will be reported at the 15<sup>th</sup> month report to the Board.

**Table A: Contract Performance Objectives**

| Performance Objective   | Target | When will outcomes be reported       | Outcome or explanation of how outcomes will be tracked                           | Comments  |
|---|--------|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| i. 50% of successfully housed clients will report improved self-sufficiency via a standardized assessment tool within 12 months of being housed.  | 50%    | At the 15 <sup>th</sup> month report | Progress will be measured using a standardized self sufficiency measurement tool | None.   |
| ii. Housed clients with a history of incarceration will demonstrate a 50% reduction in number of bed days in an incarceration setting, in the first 12 months of being housed compared to the previous 12 months. | 50%    | Beginning with this report           | 100%   | Of the 17 individuals that provided releases for this information, 13 had a history of incarceration. Of those 13, there were a total of zero bed days in the jail after being placed in housing compared to 184 days in total in the year prior to being housed. |
| iii. Housed clients with a history of citations and arrest will demonstrate a 50% reduction in number of citations and arrests, in the first 12 months of being housed compared to the previous 12 months.        | 50%    | Beginning with this report           | 100%   | Of the 17 individuals that provided releases for this information, 13 had a history of arrests. Of those 13, there were a total of zero arrests after being placed in housing compared to 16 arrests in total in the year prior to being housed.                  |
| iv. Housed clients with a history of emergency (ER) and hospital stays will demonstrate a 50% reduction in the number of bed days in  | 50%    | At the 15 <sup>th</sup> month report | Aggregate data will be reported using health care                                | None.   |

|  |              |                            |  |  |
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| ER and hospital settings, in the first 12 months of being housed compared to the previous 12 months.   |              |                            | provider and managed care insurance data on hospital and emergency room utilization  |  |
| v. Housed clients with a history of Psychiatric Health Facility (PHF) stays will demonstrate a 50% reduction in number of bed days in San Luis Obispo County PHF, in the first 12 months of being housed compared to the previous 12 months. | 50%          | Beginning with this report | 50% (from January 1, 2014 until the date of housing)   | From 2012 through 2013, there were 13 admissions for a total of 26 days. From January 1, 2014 until the date of housing, there were four admissions for an average of two days each. Since the date of housing, there have been two admissions for an average of one day each. |
| vi. In the first 12 months, 30 of 50 clients will be screened for case management  | 30 out of 50 | Beginning with this report | 43 out of 50 clients   | None.  |
| vii. In the first 12 months, 30 of 50 clients will be assessed for Affordable Care Act qualifications and apply for benefits if appropriate.   | 30 out of 50 | Beginning with this report | 27 out of 27 housed clients; remaining clients either had health insurance or were referred to a health navigator for assessment | CenCal Health is providing confirmation of Medi-Cal enrollment, participation in HUD-VASH program or other program requiring VA Health Care enrollment for participation to confirm VA Health Care enrollment.   |
| viii. 60% of clients housed will remain in housing for at least 6 months.  | 60%          | Beginning with this report | 100% (1 out of 1 client)   | Only one client was placed in housing more than six months ago. For all clients placed to date, 93% have remained in permanent housing as of 4/22/15, with 7% having left for other, permanent housing with family.  |
| ix. 50% of successfully housed clients will be offered opportunities for educational development, participation in TMHA's Supported Employment Program or other employment opportunities, and/or involvement with peer education activities. | 50%          | At 15 months               | 100%   | 27 of the 27 housed have been offered these opportunities.   |
| x. In the first 12 months, 60% of clients will increase or maintain income entitlement benefits; in months 13-24, 80% will increase or maintain income (General Assistance, SSI, SSDI, and CalFresh).  | 80%          | At 15 months               | Employment and other income will be reported on after 12 months of housing in the County's Homeless Management Information       | None.  |

|  |  |  |                |  |
|--|--|--|----------------|--|
|  |  |  | System (HMIS). |  |
|--|--|--|----------------|--|

A few of the persons in the original Top 50 list provided to TMHA will not be participating in the program due to death, ineligibility for Housing Choice Vouchers, or departure from the County before the program began. One person has passed away and two persons were deemed ineligible because they were registered sex offenders. Federal rules prohibit registered sex offenders from participating in the Housing Choice Voucher program. Two more moved in with family members out of County before program began.

## **ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES**

In addition to the outcomes noted above, staff is tracking additional outcomes. The first additional outcome is usage of County Emergency Medical Services (EMS) transportation to hospitals and to the Psychiatric Health Facility before and after housing. Data has been obtained from the County Health Agency on transport for 20 initial clients from January 1, 2011 until the housing placement date, and then from the housing placement date until April 1, 2015. A total of 35 EMS transports were provided to the clients over the approximately 4 year period prior to housing. This is an average of approximately 8.75 transports per year. Since the 20 clients were housed, there has been a total of 1 transport. Because of the short average time period in which clients have been housed, it is too early to draw conclusions about the impact of housing on EMS usage, but staff will continue to track this data and will include it in the 15<sup>th</sup> month report.

Second, the County will also measure the average Time to Placement from initial client engagement to housing placement. In the first quarter, the average time from engagement to housing placement was 12 days, with a range from a low of one day to a high of 66 days. In the second quarter, the average time from engagement to placement was 55.6 days. The combined average across two quarters is 31 days. TMHA notes that the longer time period in the second quarter was primarily due to the lack of suitable housing stock.

## **CHALLENGES**

The County is aware that the lack of affordable housing continues to be a challenge countywide, particularly affordable housing for those that are currently homeless. Multi-family housing vacancy rates for the County are approximately 1.7%. Competition for units remains high and landlords must be willing to accept Housing Choice Vouchers to participate in the 50 Now program. Clients who are in wheelchairs or who have pets have even fewer choices available to them.

The County continues to work with several community-based organizations and other cities in identifying ways to secure more affordable housing for 50 Now and the new Rapid Re-housing programs for homeless families and homeless veterans. For example, the County is proposing to partner with the Family Care Network to purchase 9-units of affordable housing to house homeless families. Additionally, the County recently allocated \$494,946 of 2015 Federal funds (HOME and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds) and the City of San Luis Obispo allocated \$197,971 of its 2015 CDBG funds to HASLO for a new 20-unit affordable rental housing development targeted for homeless veterans.

Because of the low multi-family housing vacancy rates, landlords also do not want to hold vacant units available while the units are being processed for Housing Choice Vouchers. TMHA reports that use of the "gap funding" (temporary rental assistance and/or deposit assistance) provided by the 50 Now Contract has been helpful in securing some units immediately and allowing clients to move in while the Housing Choice Voucher is being processed for the 50 Now program.

## **NEXT STEPS**

The list of most vulnerable chronically homeless individuals will be refreshed in May 2015. Surveys will be conducted at service and selected street locations. As before, the County is partnering with service providers and volunteers to conduct the surveys.

County staff will continue to monitor implementation and will report back to the Board again around November 2015, 15 months into the program contract.

## **OTHER AGENCY INVOLVEMENT/IMPACT**

TMHA has worked with several other providers since program implementation, including HASLO, the El Camino Homeless Organization (ECHO), the Community Action Partnership of San Luis Obispo, the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, the County Health Agency and the Department of Social Services.

### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

There is no impact to the County General Fund.

### **RESULTS**

The intent of the program is to permanently house and provide intensive supportive services to 50 of the most vulnerable chronically homeless individuals. Staff began monitoring performance outcomes, as noted in Table A above. The program is meeting its initial objectives, and staff will provide the next update at 15 months.